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24th November #142

Thank you!

Based on your ongoing feedback I'm continuing to improve the format and maintain interesting and relevant content

New for This week

- As a user of Microsoft technologies, you are receiving this publication to stay informed about critical topics such as Microsoft licensing, price increases, end-of-life dates, technical updates, security notices, and more.
If you do not want to continue receiving TOP STORIES, click on the unsubscribe link at the bottom of the mail.
- **USB Cables** are a web of different types, colours and.... trouble - find out more!
- **First Digital Microsoft Healthcare and Life Sciences Award Finalist**
- **SQL 2025** Generally available.
- **Visual Studio 2026** Licensing Terms.
- **Office Online Server** reaches end of Support
- **Microsoft "Triples Down"** on agentic AI!
- **New phishing attacks** need new user training to foil.
- **Google Gemini 3.0** released.

Technology Shows

Click for an update on the upcoming technology shows like CES 2026

USB Cables De-mystified

USB Cable standards and connector colours are a mystery. I have written this paper to help de-mystify this, with a recommendation for a cable tester which I'm also investing in!

TOP STORIES #141

Click button above for last weeks news

FirstMarketPlace

We have added [monday.com](#) and [Freshworks](#) to the FTG global Marketplace

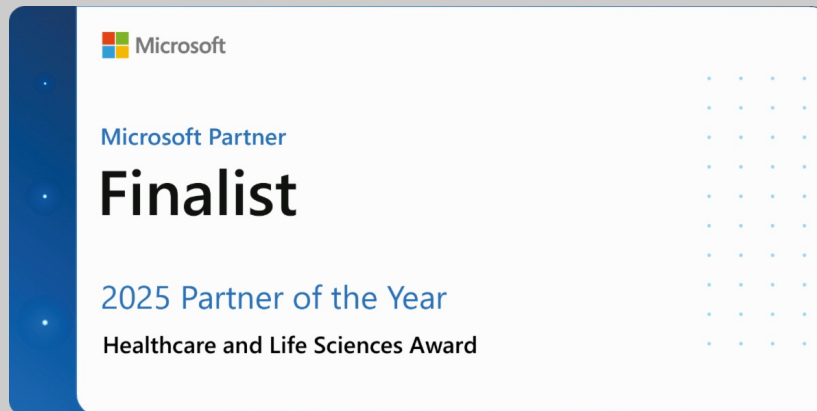
Movie releases

Get all the releases and trailers for the next month in South Africa.
[Zootropolis 2 Next Week](#)

Microsoft EoL

Summary of what to know up to December 2026. Detailed document available for download

Did You Know?



Microsoft has recognised First Technology as a Global Finalist in the 2025 Partner of the Year Awards for Healthcare and Life Sciences, selected from more than 4,600 entries across over 100 countries.

This recognition is based on our work in transforming the donor

experience through a secure, AI-enabled digital ecosystem built on Azure using our Azure-based AI Framework.

With deep Microsoft expertise, a proven delivery footprint across Africa, and teams of certified Microsoft professionals, we enable organisations to turn complex healthcare and life sciences challenges into measurable, data-driven outcomes. If your organisation is navigating real-world AI, automation or cloud transformation initiatives, we would be happy to help.

Contact First
Digital

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Microsoft News This Week

SQL 2025 is Generally Available

Microsoft confirms that SQL Server 2025 is now generally available, with a strong push on AI-driven database features plus tightened security and performance improvements. Power BI Report Server now steps in as the default reporting option, the **old Web edition is being retired with no 2025 release at all**, and a new Standard Developer Edition joins the range to round things off.

[SQL 2025 Announcement](#)

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our security and licensing specialists to help assess if you can benefit from this promotion.

[Request Account Manager](#)

Licensing Guide for Visual Studio 2026

Microsoft has published the Guide alongside the general availability of the product, but the core licensing model stays essentially the same. The changes are not dramatic. Visual Studio Cloud subscriptions that you buy through an Azure subscription are now rebranded as Monthly subscriptions, the rules are tightened around not running the software on infrastructure owned by Microsoft's Listed Providers, and all references to the now-retired Team Explorer Everywhere have been removed.

[Visual Studio Licensing Terms](#)

Office Online Server reaches End of Support 31 December 2026

Microsoft will stop all security updates bug fixes and technical support. OOS underpins browser based viewing editing and co authoring for SharePoint Server farms and is also used with Exchange Server and Power BI Report Server.

Microsoft will not block OOS from running after retirement but it will be completely unsupported which introduces direct security and compliance risk for any farm that keeps it online.

For SharePoint Server 2016, 2019, and Subscription Edition, this effectively marks the end of the supported on-premises browser Office experience, so customers must either move those workloads to Microsoft 365 to use Office for the web or accept a desktop-only model and the loss of browser previews and editing on their on-premises servers.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with SharePoint and Office experts to assist in working out what to do next, as this can get quite complicated because of unique dependencies you may have.

Microsoft Pushes Agentic AI agenda at Ignite Conference

This annual conference, attended by 20,000 delegates in San Francisco, ended with **Microsoft determined to push the AI agenda even harder.**

The event had a pervasive theme of artificial intelligence (AI) and "agentic computing" within the enterprise, showcasing new, autonomous AI agents, such as **Agent 365** for IT management and the Sales Development Agent designed to perform complex, multi-step tasks and automate workflows across the Microsoft ecosystem, which includes Azure, Microsoft 365, Windows, and integrated partner content from Microsoft Inspire.

There is also a link to keynote below (it's over 2 hours!!)

Ignite Day 1 and "Agent
365"

Microsoft Ignite
Keynote

Ignite 2025 Rise of AI Agent
Infographic

Microsoft Expands Copilot's Role in Office, Outlook and Security at Ignite 2025

The biggest changes are coming to Word, Excel and PowerPoint, where new built-in agents now do more than just respond to prompts. These agents can help users draft documents, research content, format presentations and handle other multi-step tasks, while still letting the user guide the process.

New features for Outlook also let users schedule meetings directly through chat, including booking rooms and drafting agendas.

In early access, Copilot can even resolve conflicts by automatically rescheduling flexible 1:1 meetings based on user preferences.

CoPilot's role in O365
Expands

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our CoPilot specialists to arrange for demos of these new features coming in CoPilot for Office intended to improve productivity.

Security

Matrix Push C2 Attack

This is a browser-based attack that uses browser-

based push notifications as a weapon to launch an attack by tricking users into allowing browser



attack by tricking users into allowing browser notifications through compromised websites. As is almost always the case these days, it is the human as the weakest link that is getting tricked. The entire attack takes place without installing any software.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our training partners to update you on what to watch out for in these latest attacks.

Matrix Push C2 Attack

This is yet another reminder that you should contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our specialist partners, who are experts in helping you train your users to understand these new dangers.

1 in 3 Phishing attacks use non-email channels

Phishing attacks are no longer restricted to emails, like with Matrix attack other channels are being used, especially LinkedIn. LinkedIn DM's bypass normal security measures, and worryingly allows for easy access to high-value targets.

It's the most direct way to reach your intended contact, and therefore one of the best places to launch highly targeted spear-phishing attacks.

Contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our specialist partners, who are experts in helping you train your users to stay alert to these attacks.

Phishing over LinkedIn

Cloud & AI

Gemini 3.0 Released - Search is Transformed

Coincidentally, Google released Gemini 3.0 at the same time as Microsoft Ignite, and with its release has triggered the transformation of Search by embedding these capabilities into the world's most popular search engine - and maybe with greater success than AI capabilities embedded into Windows 11. It's still early days, and things can change, but now is a good time to experiment with AI Mode in your internet searches.

Gemini AI Mode 3.0



Try email & social marketing for free!